



PRESS RELEASE

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Statement by Chairman Hunter
Hearings on Abu Ghraib:
The Schlesinger Report; and the Kern, Fay, and Jones Report

“After inexcusable prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib Prison in Iraq was reported by the Department of Defense, the Secretary of Defense quickly moved to find out what happened. Today, the Armed Services Committee heard from the Honorable James Schlesinger, chairman of the Independent Panel, and the Honorable Harold Brown on their findings. We also heard from three general officers, General Paul. Kern, Lieutenant General Anthony Jones, and Major General George Fay, who lent their experience to yet another exhaustive examination of what went wrong with military detainee operations in Iraq.

“On May 12, 2004, Secretary Rumsfeld asked a distinguished panel to review all Department of Defense detainee operations to provide independent, professional advice on issues the panel considered most pertinent to allegations of abuse. The Schlesinger Panel, comprised of two former Secretaries of Defense, a retired four-star general, and a former member of this committee, released its report at the end of last month.

“The Independent Panel is the seventh of 10 major investigations, reviews, inspections, and reports into detainee operations. All of those are in addition to the over 220 criminal investigations being undertaken by the Department. Already, the Department is acting on some of the recommendations of earlier reports. It will undoubtedly incorporate the Schlesinger Panel recommendations as it moves forward.

“In and of itself, the sheer volume of this effort should serve as compelling evidence that the Department of Defense finds the abuse of detainees unacceptable and is moving very aggressively to prosecute those who commit it and take the necessary steps to ensure that the system won’t tolerate it.

“On January 19, 2004, right after viewing evidence of the abuse of detainees at Abu Ghraib prison, Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez ordered a formal administrative investigation of operations at the prison. When General Sanchez reviewed those findings, he also requested another inquiry into military intelligence activities at the prison. Last month, the Generals Kern, Fay and Jones released a report on what happened at Abu Ghraib. I believe this step is further proof that the military is committed to getting to the truth of these issues and letting the chips fall where they may.

“There are some important facts to remember: The military started the investigations. The military first reported them to the public. The military took aggressive steps to identify any systemic problems that contributed to abuse. The Department of Defense took immediate steps to correct problems as it discovered them. And today, the Department is revising its doctrine, training, and policies in order to ensure that detainees are treated in a manner consistent with our values and our obligations. That’s the image of the military that must replace the faces of a few individuals photographed disgracing their uniforms, in violation of their orders, their training, our policies, and our values.

“If you read the report by Generals Fay, Jones, and Kern carefully enough, you’ll see a Department wrestling mightily with the challenges of honoring our values while developing intelligence methods capable of saving American lives. The continual review of interrogation techniques for use at Guantanamo Bay during the winter of 2002-2003 suggests a Department that is determined to get it right, even if it means continually revising its policies. The sheer quantity of criminal investigations and the speed with which they were initiated further demonstrates the Department’s commitment to ensuring that justice is done when the rules are broken.

“We spent considerable time today focusing on what went wrong and why. These incidents are of importance and deserve our attention. However, I believe it is even more important that this issue not overshadow the honorable service being performed by the hundreds of thousands of Americans that have and continue to selflessly serve in Iraq and Afghanistan in the fight against global terrorism. Their efforts to bring freedom and democracy to these troubled parts of the world deserve our continued attention, commitment and support.”

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